

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 L-03 H-01 DHA-02 SCA-01

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /028 W

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9997

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, DM

SUBJ: W/W ARRESTS: MISSION EFFORTS TO DECREASE NUMBER OF
ARRESTS

1. ON AUGUST 17 CONSUL MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY
PROTOCOL CHIEF ROGER PAQUI, ADVERTISING VISIT AS UNOFFICIAL
AND PERSONAL. WE POINTED OUT THAT ARRESTS CONTINUING, AND
CITED EXAMPLE OF NEAR MISS WHICH OCCURRED AUG 14. THREE
AMERICANS AND A BRITISH CITIZEN STOPPED BY SOLDIERS FOR
PASSING PRESIDENCY TWO TIMES, AND EVADED ARREST ONLY BECAUSE
TWO FEMALE AMERICANS CAJOLED SOLDIERS OUT OF IT. CONSUL
POINTED OUT THAT TOURISTS WHO TAKE PICTURES FREELY IN IVORY
COAST, GHANA AND TOGO, WILL EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO DO THE SAME
THING IN BENIN IF NOT FOREWARNED.

2. CONSUL PRESENTED SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS TO REMEDY TWO RELATED
PROBLEMS: DECREASE THE NUMBER OF ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND SPEED
UP PROCESSING OF THOSE ARRESTED. CONSUL POINTED OUT THAT IF
THESE SUGGESTIONS ACTED ON, THIS WOULD SAVE MUCH TIME AND
EXPENSE FOR FOREIGN MINISTRY, INTERIOR MINISSTRY, POLICE, AND
DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, TO SAY NOTHING OF TOURISTS INVOLVED.

3. PAQUI MOST APPRECIATIVE OF CONSUL'S SUGGESTIONS,
AND REVEALED THAT HE ALREADY SCHEDULED MEETING WITH SENIOR
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OFFICIALS OF INTERIOR AND POLICE TO ADDRESS SAME TWO
PROBLEMS. HE THEN READ OFF LIST OF IDEAS HE HAD MADE TO
PRESENT TO MEETING, WHICH COINCIDED REMARKABLY TO WHAT
CONSUL PROPOSED. HE THOUGHT TWO MEASURES MOST LIKELY TO
BE ADOPTED ARE A LARGE MULTILINGUAL SIGNBOARD AT BORDER
CROSSINGS AND AIRPORT AND SIMILAR HANDOUTS TO BE GIVEN TO
VISA APPLICANTS AT BENINESE EMBASSIES, SPELLING OUT WHAT

IS FORBIDDEN IN BENIN.

4. CONSUL DID OFFER ONE IDEA TO PAQUI WHICH NOT ON HIS LIST, NAMELY THAT INTERIOR MINISTER (WHO MUST PERSONALLY APPROVE ALL RELEASES FROM DETENTION) DESIGNATE A SUBORDINATE OFFICER IN WHOM HE HAS PERSONAL CONFIDENCE TO SCREEN ALL ARREST CASES PROMPTLY, WITH AUTHORITY TO RELEASE ALL THOSE IN WHICH THERE IS NO QUESTION OF A LAW BEING VIOLATED. PAQUI FIRST SAID THAT UNDER EXISTING SITUATION, SENIOR OFFICIALS HAVE NO "HOMMES DE CONFIDENCE", AND SYSTEM NOT REALIZABLE. AFTER MORE CONSIDERATION, HE ADDED THIS POINT TO HIS LIST OF SUGGESTIONS, SAYING THAT IDEA HAD MERIT AND HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO SELL IT.

5. FYI, THERE STILL TWO GROUPS OF TOURISTS IN JAIL FOR NO REASON, TOTALLING SEVEN PEOPLE. THREE FRENCH CITIZENS ARRESTED ALMOST THREE WEEKS AGO WHEN THEY ARRIVED LEGALLY IN COTONOU, ASKED POLICEMAN FOR DIRECTIONS TO HOTEL WHERE THEY HAD RESERVATIONS, AND HE TOOK THEM TO JAIL AFTER OFFERING TO SHOW THEM WAY TO HOTEL. AS IN PAST HERE, FRENCH EMB DOING LITTLE TO HELP THEIR CITIZENS. CREAGER

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